

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI  
EASTERN DIVISION**

RUSSELL BRYANT,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
	)	
v.	)	No. 4:09-CV-1262 CAS
	)	
ST. LOUIS METROPOLITAN	)	
POLICE DEPARTMENT, et al.,	)	
	)	
Defendants.	)	

**MEMORANDUM AND ORDER**

This matter is before the Court upon the motion of plaintiff (registration no. 1148712), an inmate at South Central Correctional Center, for leave to commence this action without payment of the required filing fee [Doc. #2]. For the reasons stated below, the Court finds that plaintiff does not have sufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee and will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$26.95. See 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). Furthermore, based upon a review of the complaint, the Court finds that the complaint should be dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).

**28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1)**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), a prisoner bringing a civil action in forma pauperis is required to pay the full amount of the filing fee. If the prisoner has insufficient funds in his or her prison account to pay the entire fee, the Court must assess and, when funds exist, collect an initial partial filing fee of 20 percent of the greater of (1) the average monthly deposits in the prisoner's account, or (2) the average monthly balance in the prisoner's account for the prior six-month period. After payment of the initial partial filing fee, the prisoner is required to make monthly payments of 20 percent of the preceding month's income credited to the prisoner's account. 28 U.S.C. §

1915(b)(2). The agency having custody of the prisoner will forward these monthly payments to the Clerk of Court each time the amount in the prisoner's account exceeds \$10, until the filing fee is fully paid. Id.

Plaintiff has submitted an affidavit and a certified copy of his prison account statement for the six-month period immediately preceding the submission of his complaint. A review of plaintiff's account indicates an average monthly deposit of \$134.74, and an average monthly balance of \$43.61. Plaintiff has insufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee. Accordingly, the Court will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$26.95, which is 20 percent of plaintiff's average monthly deposit.

#### **28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis if the action is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. An action is frivolous if it "lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact." Neitzke v. Williams, 490 U.S. 319, 328 (1989). An action is malicious if it is undertaken for the purpose of harassing the named defendants and not for the purpose of vindicating a cognizable right. Spencer v. Rhodes, 656 F. Supp. 458, 461-63 (E.D.N.C. 1987), aff'd 826 F.2d 1059 (4th Cir. 1987).

To determine whether an action fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, the Court must engage in a two-step inquiry. First, the Court must identify the allegations in the complaint that are not entitled to the assumption of truth. Ashcroft v. Iqbal, 129 S. Ct. 1937, 1950-51 (2009). These include "legal conclusions" and "[t]hreadbare recitals of the elements of a cause of action [that are] supported by mere conclusory statements." Id. at 1949. Second, the Court must determine whether the complaint states a plausible claim for relief. Id. at 1950-51. This is a "context-

specific task that requires the reviewing court to draw on its judicial experience and common sense.” Id. at 1950. The plaintiff is required to plead facts that show more than the “mere possibility of misconduct.” Id. The Court must review the factual allegations in the complaint “to determine if they plausibly suggest an entitlement to relief.” Id. at 1951. When faced with alternative explanations for the alleged misconduct, the Court may exercise its judgment in determining whether plaintiff’s conclusion is the most plausible or whether it is more likely that no misconduct occurred. Id. at 1950, 51-52.

### **The Complaint**

Plaintiff brings this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 alleging violations of his civil rights. Named as defendants are the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department and Daniel Drago, a detective with the police department. Plaintiff alleges that defendant Drago used excessive force against him when he shot him during an arrest in March of 2007. Plaintiff seeks damages in the amount of \$1.5 million. For the foregoing reasons, plaintiff’s complaint will be dismissed.

### **Discussion**

Plaintiff’s claim against the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department is legally frivolous because the police department is not a suable entity. Ketchum v. City of West Memphis, Ark., 974 F.2d 81, 82 (8th Cir. 1992) (departments or subdivisions of local government are “not juridical entities suable as such.”); Catlett v. Jefferson County, 299 F. Supp. 2d 967, 968-69 (E.D. Mo. 2004).

Moreover, plaintiff’s claim against defendant Drago also fails to state a claim. The complaint is silent as to whether defendant Drago is being sued in his official or individual capacity. Where a “complaint is silent about the capacity in which [plaintiff] is suing defendant, [a district court must] interpret the complaint as including only official-capacity claims.” Egerdahl v. Hibbing Community

College, 72 F.3d 615, 619 (8th Cir.1995); Nix v. Norman, 879 F.2d 429, 431 (8th Cir. 1989).

Naming a government official in his or her official capacity is the equivalent of naming the government entity that employs the official. To state a claim against a municipality or a government official in his or her official capacity, plaintiff must allege that a policy or custom of the municipality is responsible for the alleged constitutional violation. Monell v. Department of Social Services, 436 U.S. 658, 690-91 (1978). The instant complaint does not contain any allegations that a policy or custom of St. Louis City was responsible for the alleged violations of plaintiff's constitutional rights. As a result, the complaint fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.

Accordingly,

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that plaintiff's motion to proceed in forma pauperis is **GRANTED**. [Doc. 2]

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the plaintiff shall pay an initial filing fee of \$26.95 within thirty (30) days of the date of this Order. Plaintiff is instructed to make his remittance payable to "Clerk, United States District Court," and to include upon it: (1) his name; (2) his prison registration number; (3) the case number; and (4) that the remittance is for an original proceeding.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the Clerk shall not issue process or cause process to issue upon the complaint because the complaint is legally frivolous or fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or both.

An Order of Dismissal will accompany this Memorandum and Order.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Charles A. Shaw", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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**CHARLES A. SHAW**  
**UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE**

Dated this 4th day of September, 2009.